

TRANSATLANTIC ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP

Report of the TEP Steering Group to the Meeting of the Trade and Economic Ministers at the U.S.-EU Summit, Washington, D.C., December 18, 1998

The Steering Group (SG) held its first meeting on December 16, 1998. It welcomed the establishment of various working groups and the initial work already accomplished in the implementation of the Action Plan (AP).

It emphasized the need to ensure that deadlines set out in the AP would be fully met. This requires an intensification of efforts in a number of areas.

Both sides insisted that results should be balanced and that all issues should be pursued with equal determination. They also confirmed their readiness to tackle difficult issues, while taking into account each other's sensitivities. The SG encouraged the use of innovative and flexible approaches in order to reach results, especially in areas where regulatory authority is exercised at the sub-central level.

It reaffirmed the importance of fully integrating social and environmental considerations in the TEP work on trade liberalization. It welcomed the initial meetings between government officials and organizations involved in the Transatlantic Consumer Dialogue and the Transatlantic Environment Dialogue. It looked forward to continued communication with the Transatlantic Business Dialogue and Transatlantic Labor Dialogue.

The SG reviewed area by area the work accomplished so far under the Action Plan. In particular, in the field of technical barriers to trade, the SG noted that marine safety equipment has been identified as a possible additional sector to add to the EU-U.S. MRA and that further exploration would be continued in this and other sectors including elevators, calibration, cosmetics, telecommunication, and road safety equipment for any possible appropriate arrangements [U.S.: including regulatory cooperation] in accordance with the AP. [EU: It also reiterated the need to intensify regulatory cooperation.]

In the area of services, it noted positive elements, in particular the drawing up on an ad referendum basis of a consultation arrangement on future policy proposals. On mutual recognition, it stressed that intensive work would be needed to meet the March 1999 deadline to complete a model framework for the negotiation of mutual recognition agreements on specific services sectors. It noted that in addition to the work foreseen on professional services in particular with respect to engineers, other sectors have been identified for further exploration, including insurance, travel agency services, distribution and air freight services.

Finally, as far as the regular dialogue on multilateral issues is concerned, the SG agreed that work on all substantive issues contained in the AP needs to be pursued with vigor.